



City of San Antonio, Texas

Results and Findings

Mayor's Customer Satisfaction Survey of the
Development Services Department

December 2005

*Special thanks to the following individuals for their assistance
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Executive Summary

Between October 19 and October 31, 2005, Mayor Phil Hardberger conducted an internet-based customer satisfaction survey of the Development Services Department. Those surveyed included 8,584 clients of the department with registered email addresses.

Of those, 1,907 responded to the request. This represents a 22 percent response rate, demonstrating strong interest in this topic. Over 1,000 respondents made specific written recommendations for improving services.

The survey sought information regarding the respondents' "most recent experience." Over 45 percent of the respondents' most recent experience had occurred within the previous month. Additionally, the survey specifically mentioned that identities of the respondents would remain anonymous, thus increasing the likelihood of accurate information.

The Development Services Department serves its clients through three delivery points: its main office within the Development and Business Services Center, located at 1901 South Alamo Street (also referred to as the "One Stop Center"), four City Link Centers, and on-line through the City's website. The survey was designed to gauge the use and satisfaction with service delivery at each point.

Findings:

- Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they most recently sought services by visiting the One Stop Center.
- The experiences of those respondents were mixed. Some were very pleased with the services they received; others were very dissatisfied. Overall, only 56 percent of the respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their most recent experiences at the One Stop Center were satisfactory.
- The internet is a popular option for service delivery. Approximately 30 percent of the respondents obtained services via the internet. In fact, the majority of those seeking construction trade permits (e.g., electrical permit), used the internet. Likewise, a majority of inspection requests were made via the website. Several respondents specifically requested additional services, information, and forms be provided through the website.
- Despite the frequent challenges and limitations of technology, respondents seeking service using the internet actually had a *higher* level of satisfaction (67%) than those using the One Stop Center (56%).

- Respondent satisfaction levels vary only slightly by the actual service sought. Those seeking on-line Garage Sale Permits had the highest average satisfaction score. In fact, individuals seeking service for *personal* reasons had higher overall satisfaction levels. Persons in the development industry—those that regularly seek Department services—were the most dissatisfied with the overall level of service.
- According to several respondents, the Development Services Department and related review process has improved in recent years.
- Some client experiences are very positive; others very negative. The customer experience is vastly different depending on the staff person encountered. Many written comments praise certain staff; others are very critical.
- Survey respondents expressed frustration with staff attitudes, treatment, and motivation. Some staff members, for example, were accused of having negative and unreasonable attitudes, or simply not caring about the needs of the client. Other staff members were observed handling personal matters (e.g., taking personal calls in front of customer) instead of being attentive to the client. Others complained about staff refusing or reluctant to serve clients at or after 4:30 p.m. (official closing time of City offices). Some inspectors were accused of using their authority arbitrarily.
- Clients want more transparency of the system. They often do not understand the process.
- Clients want better communication with staff and to be able to contact staff more efficiently. Numerous submitted comments were critical of staff not returning calls. Other comments suggest that email addresses are difficult to obtain, but are the most reliable way (for staff it seems) to respond to clients.
- Many clients complained about turn-around time for permits or review. Others complained about scheduling of inspections. Many clients acknowledged that demands on staff were outstripping their ability to respond, and strongly advocated the hiring of additional staff.
- Additionally, many clients complained about staff, advocating additional training for staff to increase expertise.
- Many clients provided anecdotal information concerning a particular case to stress their concern that lower-level staff members and managers need to be able to reach reasonable decisions when unusual issues arise.

- Many clients expressed frustration concerning decision-making conflicts that occur either between: (a) departments reviewing plans, or (b) between the approving plan reviewer and the inspector in the field. Some clients communicated specific instances where these conflicts extended their review period or project costs by tens of thousands of dollars.
- While most clients appreciated the on-line system, there were many suggestions for improving the internet-based options.
- Many comments asked that additional services be web-enabled. A few respondents requested that code information, forms, and checklists be added to the website for convenience.
- Several comments requested specific adjustments to the on-line system to improve a particular service
- Many respondents complained that the website and on-line services were not very user friendly, and suggested that they can be improved. Underlying several on-line services is the overall review and inspection system. Many comments were submitted expressing frustration with the overall system and not the on-line component.

Improvements Requested by Survey Respondents (in priority order):

- 1. The Department should work to improve customer service and staff motivation.**
- 2. The Department should reduce the length of the overall review process.**
- 3. The Department should make its on-line services more user-friendly and work to provide more services via the Internet.**
- 4. The organization should work to improve coordination and communication between departments during plan review and inspections to reduce unnecessary delays and cost to its customers.**
- 5. The Department should ensure that staff is well trained, possessing expertise with code requirements and development process. Staff should be able to handle all inquiries.**
- 6. The Department should hire more staff (inspectors and plan reviewers). Workloads should match the process and goals.**
- 7. The Department should strive to provide clarity regarding the development process and code requirements.**
- 8. The Department should work to improve overall communication with its customers, specifically addressing telephone services, response times to inquiries, and ensure customer follow-up.**

9. The Department, with additional inspectors, should develop a system to ensure that inspection appointments can be scheduled and met, accordingly.

Introduction

All land development and construction activity within the City of San Antonio (and much of the land within its extraterritorial jurisdiction) is regulated to ensure compliance with various building and safety codes. This essential function is conducted by the staff of its Development Services Department. Over 20 discrete functions are provided by the Department, before, during, and after the development process.

While not unique to San Antonio, the Development Services Department has been the subject of strong criticism by some involved in the development industry. The most frequent complaints Mayor Phil Hardberger has received pertain to this department. However, the nature of the complaints was so different that Mayor Hardberger sought additional information concerning the process by which property is developed and improved.

In October 2005, Mayor Hardberger toured the Development and Business Services Center (the so-called, "One Stop Center," located at 1901 South Alamo Street) to understand the review process. He also worked at the reception desk, observing staff and interacting with contractors concerning their experiences at the One Stop Center.

He also instructed that a customer satisfaction survey be conducted to better understand the issues faced by the development community. This report presents the findings of that survey.

Survey Methodology

The Mayor's Office, in conjunction with staff of Development Services, identified the discrete services and service delivery points (e.g., One Stop Center, website, and community link service centers) of the department, as of October 17, 2005. (It should be noted that certain streamlined residential permitting services were introduced after the survey was concluded.) Subsequent surveys should address scenarios in which the client contacted the Department by phone.

Technique: For cost considerations and efficiency, it was determined that an internet-based survey was the preferred methodology for this study. It was recognized at the time that many clients will regard the emailed survey correspondence as "spam" or junk mail, and may simply not respond. To reduce the apprehension of some, the survey respondents were informed that the survey would be anonymous. A 14-day response period was established for the survey.

Survey Instrument: The Mayor's Office developed the survey questions, question order and follow-on question sequences, possible responses, and introduction correspondence. Using an internet-based survey tool from KeySurvey.com, the survey was loaded, formatted, and tested by staff of the Economic Development Department in conjunction with the Mayor's Office. The KeySurvey tool assigned a secret code for each email address and link. This code prevented any one individual from responding to the survey more than once. It also permitted the respondent to stop and start the survey at any point, while capturing the previous responses.

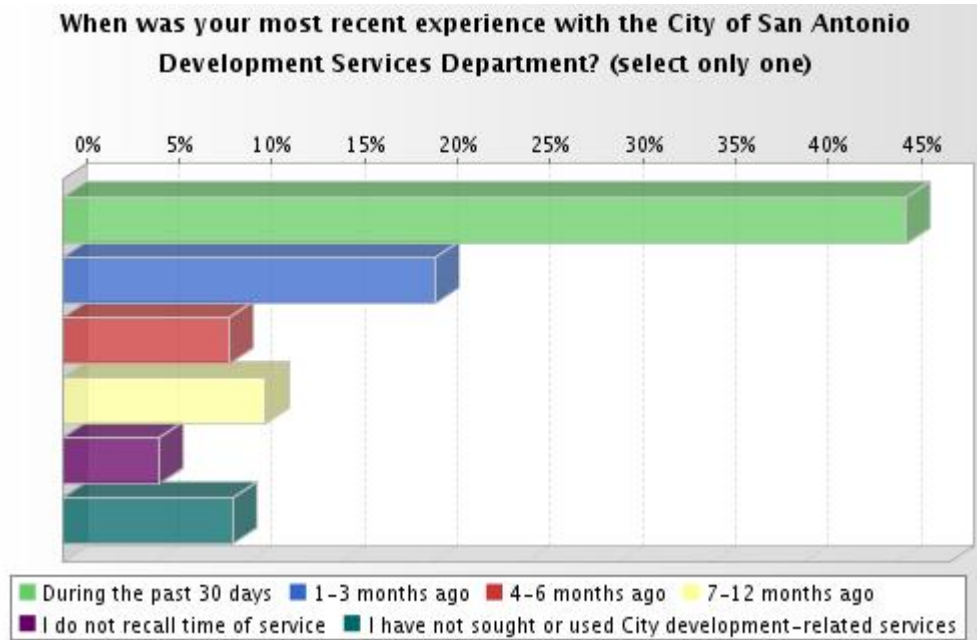
Database of Clients: The Development Services Department provided over 10,500 email addresses that were registered with the department within the 12 months preceding the survey. The Mayor's Office omitted approximately 400 emails to city government email addresses, incomplete email addresses, or those to recognized local government email addresses. A list of 10,109 email addresses was ultimately used as the database for this survey.

Survey Response: On October 19, 2005, an email from Mayor Phil Hardberger was sent to those 10,109 addresses. Approximately 1,525 of those emails were not delivered, because the email address was inaccurate, no longer valid (e.g., due to changed employment), or because spam filters blocked receipt. Several individuals replied to the email to verify its origin and intent. The total number of delivered emails and survey request was 8,584. The KeySurvey assigned a code to the link on each individual email. If the database did not record the code of a particular email survey as "complete," the system emailed a reminder note. The survey closed on Monday, October 31. **Of the 8,584 delivered surveys, 1,907 responded to the request. This represents a 22 percent response rate, demonstrating the industry interest in this topic.**

Survey Results

Of the 1,907 respondents, 45.5 percent had experiences with the Development Services Department within the preceding 30 days, suggesting that their recollections regarding the experience were still fresh. Almost 75 percent sought service within the preceding six months.

Graph 1



Who responded to the Survey?

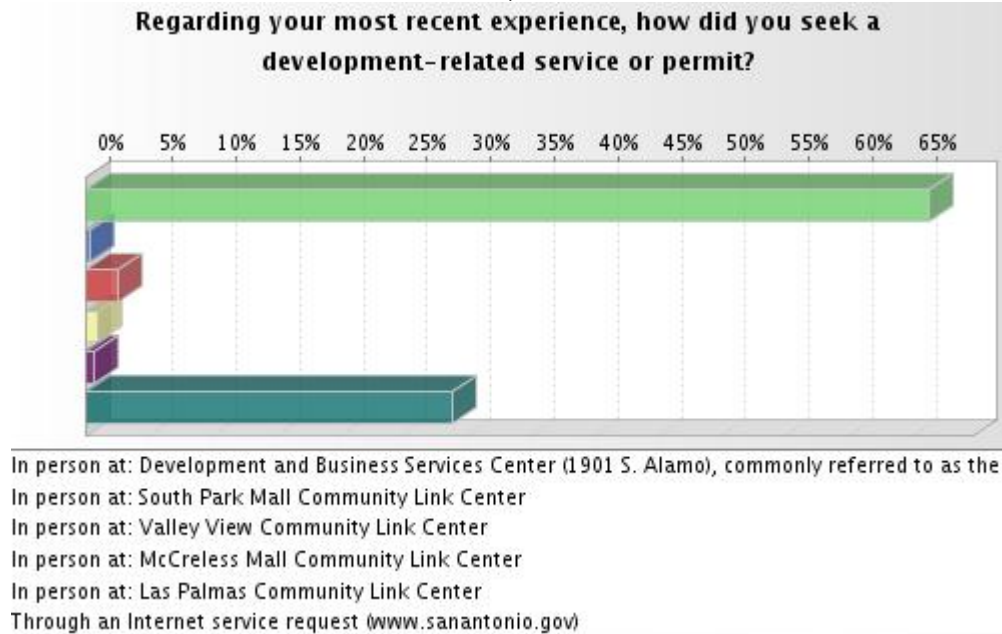
Thirty-eight percent of the survey group indicated that their “most recent experience” was their first and only experience with the Development Services Department.

- 76 percent were male
- 66 percent were White (non-Hispanic) and 22 percent indicated Hispanic
- 82 percent were 35 years of age or older
- 89 had some college or greater. 56 percent possessed college degrees.

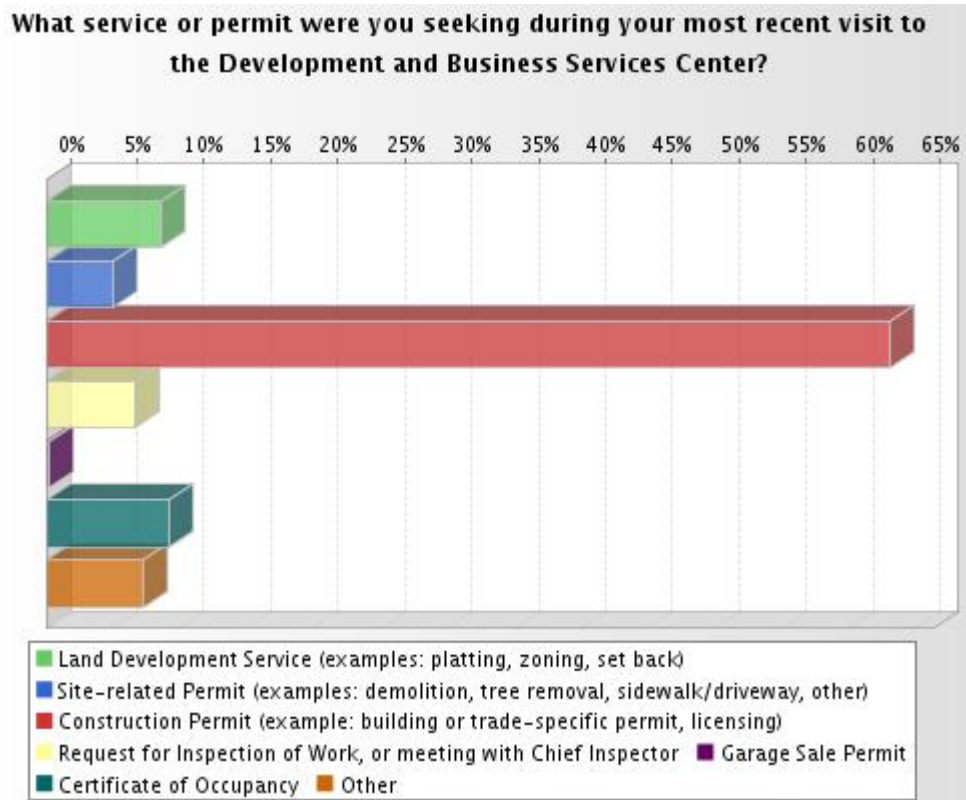
Points of Service Delivery

Despite several service delivery options that are available, approximately two-thirds of the Development Services Department clients sought assistance at the One Stop Center. (See Graph 2) The department's on-line service delivery option was sought by almost 30 percent of survey respondents.

Graph 2



Graph 3



Presently, general building permits are issued only at the One Stop Center. However, construction trade permits (e.g., electrical or plumbing permits) are issued at both the One Stop Center and the Community Link Centers. Construction trade permits are also issued on-line, since 2004. Now, of those surveyed, more than half of the respondents sought their most recent permit on-line.

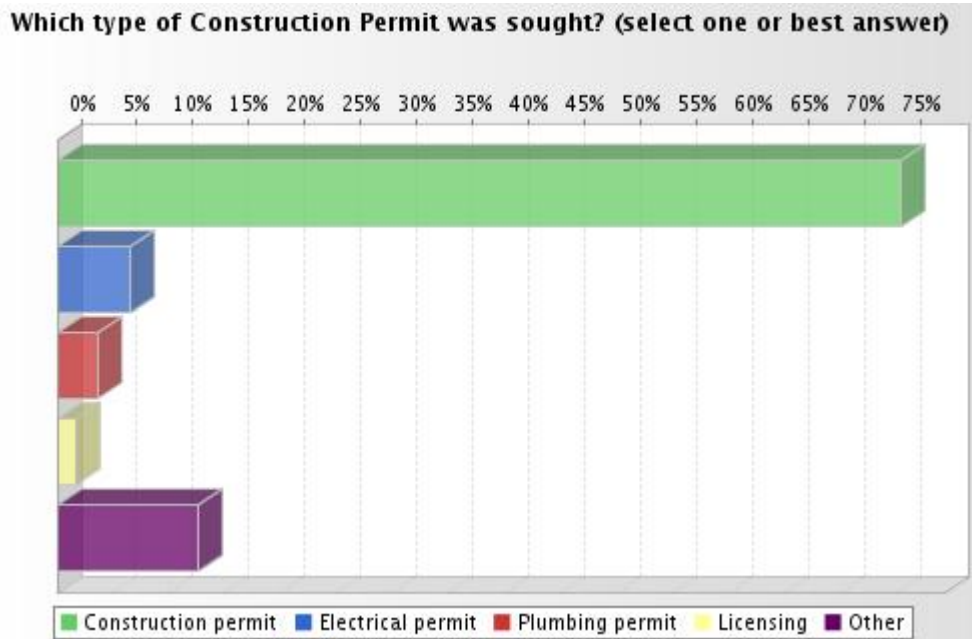
Table 1: Delivery Choice of Respondents for Permits

Services Sought	Building Permit	Construction Trade Permit
DBSC ("One Stop")	548	74
Community Link Service Ctr.	not available	70
On-Line Issuance	not available	168
TOTALS (of 1,907 Respondents)	548 (28.7%)	312 (16.4%)

Major Services Sought: Construction Permits

Of the One Stop users, a strong majority of clients were seeking construction building permits over construction trade permits (e.g., electrical permit). Many trade permits are now offered on-line. Graph 4, below, indicates that over 75 percent of One Stop clients were seeking general constructions permits.

Graph 4: One Stop Permits Sought



Other Services Sought

While they are often very visible and involve public processes, the proportion and number of respondents seeking land development services was relatively small. (See Chart 5) This is also true for those seeking site development permits (see Chart 6).

Chart 5: Number of Respondents Seeking Land Development Services

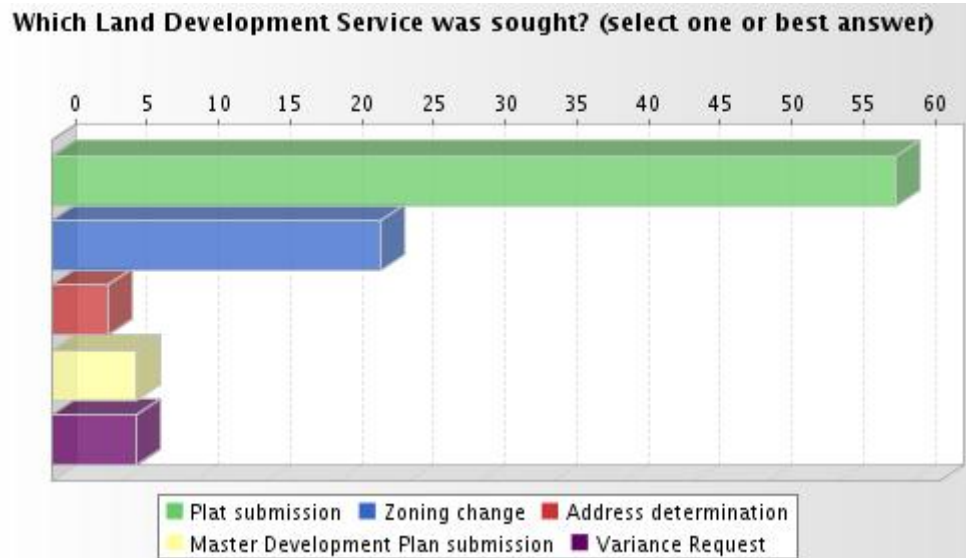
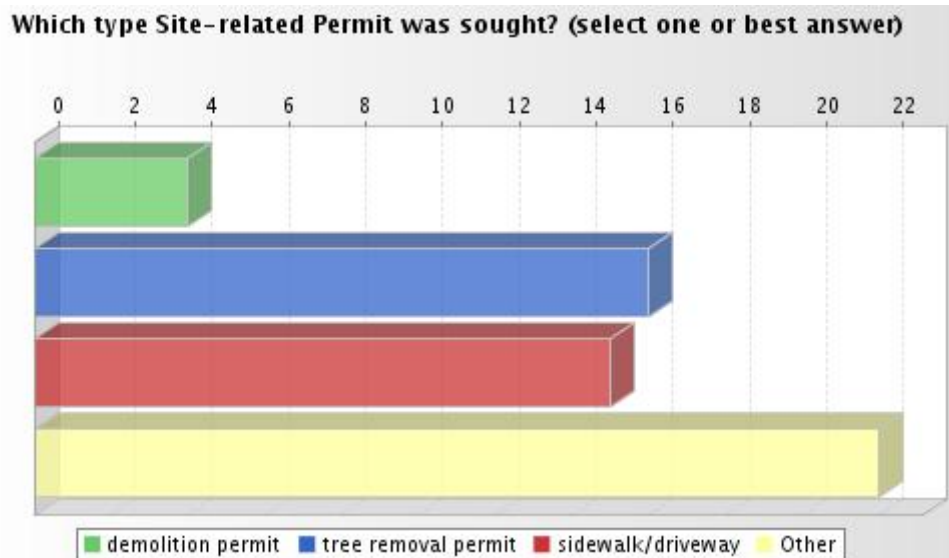


Chart 6: Number of Respondents Seeking Site Development Permits



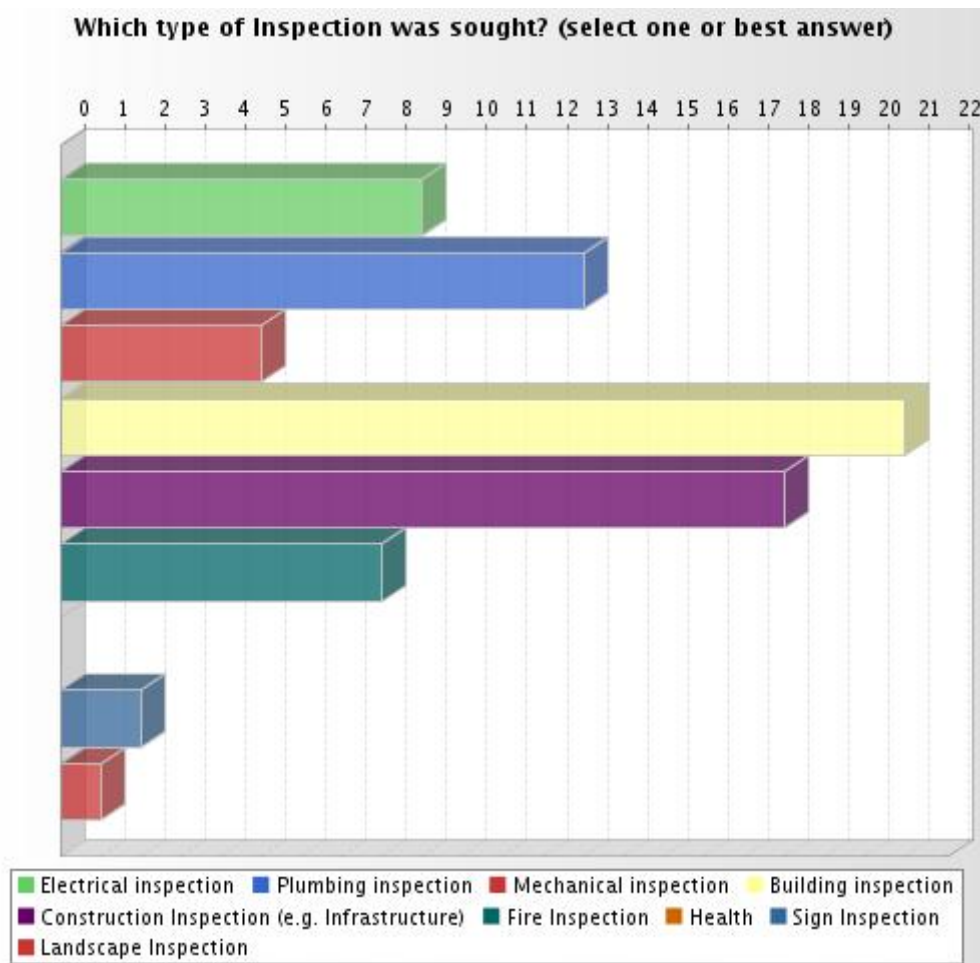
Inspections

Once a project or installation is complete, contractors will request an inspection by Development Services. Presently, there are two options to request an inspection: on-line or in-person at the One Stop Center. A majority of the respondents indicated that they requested an inspection on-line versus those who indicated that they requested an inspection at the One Stop.

Table 2: Respondent Choices Regarding Inspection Requests

Service Location	No. of Respondents: Inspection Requests
On-line	93
In Person	77

Graph 7: One Stop Inspections Sought



Customer Satisfaction

Questions were posed to each survey respondent regarding their most recent experience with the Development Services Department. Customers that sought services at the One Stop Center were asked to rate their level of agreement with five statements concerning the delivery of services. On-line customers were asked to evaluate only three questions. The experiences of the respondents were mixed.

Overall, only 56 percent of the One Stop respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their most recent experience at the One Stop Center was satisfactory.

Of the customers using internet services, 67 percent indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their on-line experience was satisfactory, overall.

Satisfaction Level by Service

The responses to the five survey questions regarding experiences of One Stop customers was cross-tabulated by the specific service sought. This information is presented in Tables 3 through 7, on the following pages.

It is important to note that the number of respondents seeking certain services was very low. For example, there was only one respondent that indicated that they requested a Landscaping Inspection. Similarly, only two respondents indicated that they were seeking a sign inspection. This is explicitly noted to discourage against drawing any firm conclusions from the data presented in the cross tabulations since samples sizes are significantly smaller.

Table 3: Average Score by Specific Service (Q1)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	“During my visit seeking City Services, the staff welcomed me and provided me with information related to my visit.”	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
	Service Sought by Client	Avg. Score
	Request for Landscape Inspection*	3.0
	Request for Mechanical Inspection	2.8
	Address Determination	2.8
	Request for Fire Inspection	2.8
	Demolition Permit	2.8
	Request for Plumbing Inspection	2.7
	Request for Electrical Inspection	2.7
	Request for Building Inspection	2.4
	Certificate of Occupancy	2.3
	Electrical Permit	2.3
	“Other Construction” Permit	2.2
	Plat Submission	2.2
	Tree Removal Permit	2.2
	Construction Permit	2.2
	Variance Request	2.2
	“Other Site-Related” Permit	2.1
	Sidewalk or Driveway Permit	2.1
	Zoning Change	2.1
	Request for Construction Inspection	2.1
	Licensing	2.1
	Plumbing Permit	2.1
	Garage Sale Permit	2.0
	“Other”	2.0
	Master Development Plan Submission	1.8
	Request for Sign Inspection*	1.0

* - two or less respondents for this category

Table 4: Average Score by Specific Service (Q2)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit, staff adequately informed me of the process and information needs related to my project.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Service Sought by Client		Avg. Score
Request for Landscape Inspection*		4.0
Demolition Permit		3.7
Address Determination		3.5
Request for Electrical Inspection		3.0
Request for Mechanical Inspection		2.8
Request for Fire Inspection		2.8
Tree Removal Permit		2.7
Request for Building Inspection		2.7
Request for Plumbing Inspection		2.6
Sidewalk or Driveway Permit		2.6
Plat Submission		2.6
Certificate of Occupancy		2.5
Licensing		2.5
“Other Construction” Permit		2.4
Construction Permit		2.4
Request for Construction Inspection		2.3
Electrical Permit		2.2
“Other”		2.2
“Other Site-Related” Permit		2.2
Master Development Plan Submission		2.2
Variance Request		2.2
Plumbing Permit		2.1
Zoning Change		2.0
Garage Sale Permit		1.3
Request for Sign Inspection*		1.0

* - two or less respondents for this category

Table 5: Average Score by Specific Service (Q3)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit, staff greeted me and was professional throughout my visit.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Service Sought by Client		Avg. Score
Request for Landscape Inspection*		4.0
Request for Plumbing Inspection		3.0
Request for Electrical Inspection		2.4
Certificate of Occupancy		2.3
Address Determination		2.3
Request for Fire Inspection		2.3
Demolition Permit		2.2
Request for Building Inspection		2.2
Request for Construction Inspection		2.2
Request for Mechanical Inspection		2.2
Sidewalk or Driveway Permit		2.2
Master Development Plan Submission		2.2
Variance Request		2.2
Construction Permit		2.2
“Other Construction” Permit		2.1
Electrical Permit		2.1
Plat Submission		2.1
Licensing		2.0
Zoning Change		2.0
Tree Removal Permit		1.9
“Other Site-Related” Permit		1.9
“Other”		1.8
Plumbing Permit		1.8
Garage Sale Permit		1.3
Request for Sign Inspection*		1.0

* - two or less respondents for this category

Table 6: Average Score by Specific Service (Q4)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit, I received the service that I sought in a timely fashion.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Service Sought by Client		Avg. Score
Request for Landscape Inspection*		4.0
Request for Plumbing Inspection		3.3
Demolition Permit		3.3
Address Determination		3.0
Sidewalk or Driveway Permit		2.9
Other Construction” Permit		2.9
Construction Permit		2.9
Request for Building Inspection		2.9
Master Development Plan Submission		2.8
Variance Request		2.8
Request for Mechanical Inspection		2.8
Certificate of Occupancy		2.8
Request for Electrical Inspection		2.8
“Tree Removal Permit		2.7
Plat Submission		2.7
Electrical Permit		2.7
Licensing		2.7
Request for Construction Inspection		2.7
Request for Fire Inspection		2.6
“Other”		2.4
Zoning Change		2.4
“Other Site-Related” Permit		2.3
Plumbing Permit		2.2
Garage Sale Permit		1.7
Request for Sign Inspection*		1.0

* - two or less respondents for this category

Table 7: Average Score by Specific Service (Q5)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	“Overall, this experience was satisfactory.”	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
	Service Sought by Client	Avg. Score
	Request for Landscape Inspection*	4.0
	Demolition Permit	3.5
	Request for Plumbing Inspection	3.2
	Sidewalk or Driveway Permit	2.9
	Request for Mechanical Inspection	2.8
	Request for Electrical Inspection	2.8
	Request for Fire Inspection	2.8
	Tree Removal Permit	2.7
	Construction Permit	2.7
	Master Development Plan Submission	2.7
	Request for Building Inspection	2.6
	Certificate of Occupancy	2.6
	Request for Construction Inspection	2.6
	Plat Submission	2.5
	“Other Construction” Permit	2.5
	Address Determination	2.5
	Zoning Change	2.5
	“Other”	2.4
	Electrical Permit	2.3
	Licensing	2.3
	Variance Request	2.3
	“Other Site-Related” Permit	2.2
	Plumbing Permit	2.1
	Garage Sale Permit	1.3
	Request for Sign Inspection*	1.0

* - two or less respondents for this category

Satisfaction Level by Customer Type

Tables 8 through 10 present the average responses to questions regarding on-line services. In general, the service with the highest satisfaction level is on-line Garage Sale Permits. On average, the satisfaction level did not vary significantly by question or by other services.

Table 8: Average Score by Specific On-line Service (online Q1)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered On-Line	
Question Posed:	<i>"The on-line system adequately informed me of the process and information needs related to my project."</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
	Service Sought by Client	Avg. Score
Other		2.5
Construction Trade Permit (all categories)		2.3
Request for Inspection (all categories)		2.3
Garage Sale Permit		1.9

Table 9: Average Score by Specific On-line Service (online Q2)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered On-Line	
Question Posed:	<i>"I received the on-line service that I sought in a timely fashion."</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
	Service Sought by Client	Avg. Score
Other		2.5
Construction Trade Permit (all categories)		2.3
Request for Inspection (all categories)		2.3
Garage Sale Permit		1.7

Table 10: Average Score by Specific On-line Service (online Q3)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered On-Line	
Question Posed:	<i>"Overall, this on-line experience was satisfactory."</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
	Service Sought by Client	Avg. Score
Other		2.5
Construction Trade Permit (all categories)		2.4
Request for Inspection (all categories)		2.3
Garage Sale Permit		1.9

Tables 11 through 15 present the average responses to questions regarding the One Stop services, by customer type. Individuals seeking service for personal reasons had a higher level of satisfaction on all questions. However, for all industry professionals, the average responses varied by question. It is difficult to draw analytical conclusions from these average responses. However, it is clear industry professionals—those that rely on the services and staff of the Development Services Department on a regular basis—are the least satisfied group.

Table 11: Average Score by One Stop Customer Type (Q1)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit seeking City Services, the staff welcomed me and provided me with information related to my visit.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Type of Client		Avg. Score
Trade Contractor		2.4
“Other” Business		2.2
General Contractor		2.2
Engineer or Architect		2.2
Construction Project Manager		2.1
Individual Seeking Service for Personal Reasons		2.1

Table 12: Average Score by One Stop Customer Type (Q2)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit, staff adequately informed me of the process and information needs related to my project.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Type of Client		Avg. Score
Engineer or Architect		2.5
Construction Project Manager		2.4
General Contractor		2.4
“Other” Business		2.4
Trade Contractor		2.4
Individual Seeking Service for Personal Reasons		2.2

Table 13: Average Score by One Stop Customer Type (Q3)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit, staff greeted me and was professional throughout my visit.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Type of Client		Avg. Score
General Contractor		2.2
Trade Contractor		2.2
“Other” Business		2.2
Construction Project Manager		2.1
Engineer or Architect		2.0
Individual Seeking Service for Personal Reasons		2.0

Table 14: Average Score by One Stop Customer Type (Q4)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	<i>“During my visit, I received the service that I sought in a timely fashion.”</i>	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Type of Client		Avg. Score
Trade Contractor		2.9
General Contractor		2.9
Engineer or Architect		2.8
Construction Project Manager		2.8
“Other” Business		2.7
Individual Seeking Service for Personal Reasons		2.4

Table 15: Average Score by One Stop Customer Type (Q5)

Satisfaction with:	Services Offered at One-Stop Center	
Question Posed:	“Overall, this experience was satisfactory.”	
Answer Options	1=Strongly Agree 3=Neutral/No Opinion 5=Strongly Disagree	
Type of Client		Avg. Score
Engineer or Architect		2.7
General Contractor		2.6
“Other” Business		2.6
Construction Project Manager		2.6
Trade Contractor		2.5
Individual Seeking Service for Personal Reasons		2.3

Observations and Recommendations from Supplementary Comments

The purpose of the Development Services Department is a regulatory function. Its goal is to protect the well-being and property of the citizens by preventing unsafe, illegal, or otherwise bad design and construction. Homeowners, businesses, insurance companies, and financial institutions expect this scrutiny, particularly through inspections. This regulatory role requires staff to look for errors in plans and work. Not surprisingly, this approach can frustrate owners, developers, architects, engineers, contractors, and subcontractors.

Some comments were received from clients asserting that, in some cases, the Development Services Department is not sufficiently performing its role to protect the public. Some claim that permits are frequently not obtained by contractors; work is therefore not inspected. Others questioned the rationale of permit requirements without subsequent City inspection requirements. Some have suggested that the inspectors are, in some cases, not sufficiently reviewing or enforcing requirements on projects due to workload.

While some of comments by the respondents—not surprisingly—address these points, the vast majority offer ways to improve the service of the Department. It is important to note that each of the recommendations that follow was submitted by 10 or more respondents.

One-Stop Experience

1. According to several respondents, the Development Services Department and related review process has improved in recent years.
2. Some client experiences are very positive; others very negative. (This is also reflected in the responses to the questions.) It would be worthwhile to explore the reasons for these different experiences. Clearly, the customer experience can be vastly different depending on the staff person encountered.
3. On this point: Many comments expressed frustration with staff attitudes, treatment, and motivation. Some staff members, for example, were accused of having negative and unreasonable attitudes, or simply not caring about the needs of the client. Other staff members were observed handling personal matters (e.g., taking personal calls in front of customer) instead of being attentive to the client. Others complained about staff refusing or reluctant to serve clients at or after 4:30 p.m. (official closing time of City offices). Some inspectors were accused of acting arbitrarily.

Requested Improvement: The Department should work to improve customer service and staff motivation.

4. Clients want more transparency of the system. They often do not understand the process.

Requested Improvement: The Department should strive to provide clarity regarding the development process and code requirements.

5. Clients want better communication with staff and to be able to contact staff more efficiently. Numerous submitted comments were critical of staff not returning calls. Other comments suggest that email addresses are difficult to obtain, but the most convenient way (for staff it seems) to respond to clients.

Requested Improvement: The Department should work to improve overall communication with its customers, specifically addressing telephone services, response times to inquiries, and ensure customer follow-up.

6. Many clients complained about turn-around time for permits or review. Others complained about scheduling of inspections. Many clients acknowledged that demands on staff were outstripping their ability to respond, and strongly advocated the hiring of additional staff. Several concerns were raised about inadequate or rushed inspections due to the excessive inspector workloads. Both SAWS and CPS utility service procedures were viewed as lengthy and needing improvement.

Requested Improvement: The Department should reduce the length of the overall review process.

Requested Improvement: The Department should hire more staff (inspectors and plan reviewers). Workloads should match the process and goals.

Requested Improvement: The Department, with additional inspectors, should develop a system to ensure that inspection appointments can be scheduled and met, accordingly.

7. Additionally, many clients complained about staff, and advocated additional training for staff to increase expertise.

Requested Improvement: The Department should ensure that staff is well trained, possessing expertise with code requirements and development process. Staff should be able to handle all inquiries.

8. Many clients provided anecdotal information concerning a particular case to stress their concern that lower-level staff and managers needs to be able to reach reasonable decisions when unusual issues arise.
9. Many clients expressed frustration concerning decision-making conflicts that occur either between: (a) departments reviewing plans, or (b) approving plan reviewer and the inspector in the field. Some clients communicated specific instances where these conflicts extended their review period or project costs by tens of thousands of dollars.

Requested Improvement: The organization should work to improve coordination and communication between departments during plan review and inspections to reduce unnecessary delays and cost to its customers.

On-Line Experience

10. While most clients appreciated the on-line system, there were many suggestions for improving the internet-based options.
11. Many comments asked that additional services be web-enabled. A few respondents requested that code information, forms, and checklists be added to the website for convenience.
12. Several comments requested specific adjustments to the on-line system to improve a particular service
13. Many respondents complained that the website and on-line services were not very user friendly, and suggested that they can be improved.
14. Underlying several on-line services is the overall review and inspection system. Many comments were submitted expressing frustration with the overall system and not the on-line component, per se.

Requested Improvement: The Department should make its on-line services more user-friendly and work to provide more services via the Internet.